

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO
EASTERN DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

vs.

Criminal Action 2:21-cr-223
JUDGE JAMES L. GRAHAM

JAMES EDWARD AUSTIN

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

The United States and defendant James Edward Austin entered into a plea agreement, executed under the provisions of Rule 11(c)(1)(C) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, whereby defendant agreed to enter a plea of guilty to an *Information* charging him with being a felon in possess of a firearm in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 922(g)(1), 924(a). *Information*, ECF No. 29. The *Information* also contains a forfeiture provision. *Id.*¹ On May 25, 2022, defendant, assisted by his counsel, appeared for an arraignment and entry of guilty plea proceeding.²

After being advised of his right to appear personally and with his counsel and after consulting with his counsel, defendant consented to appear by videoconference.

Defendant waived his right to an indictment in open court and after being advised of the nature of the charge and of his rights. See Fed. R. Crim P. 7(b).

¹The current *Plea Agreement* as filed with the Court, ECF No. 40, is missing language in Paragraphs 13 and 14. Defense counsel represented, however, that defendant was aware of, understood, and agreed to the terms contained in those paragraphs. The parties will file another version of the *Plea Agreement* which will contain the missing language. In addition to specifying sentencing terms, the *Plea Agreement* includes an appellate waiver provision that preserves only certain claims for appeal, collateral challenge, or request for reduction of sentence. In the *Plea Agreement*, defendant also agrees to the forfeiture provision in the *Information*.

²A guilty plea proceeding was originally held on December 22, 2021, but was ended when defendant announced that he did not wish to proceed. *Minute Entry*, ECF No. 34. A new *Plea Agreement*, ECF No. 40, has now been filed, and defendant agreed to proceed with the arraignment and entry of guilty plea.

Defendant consented, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §636(b)(3), to enter a guilty plea before a Magistrate Judge. See *United States v. Cukaj*, 25 Fed. Appx. 290, 291 (6th Cir. 2001) (Magistrate Judge may accept a guilty plea with the express consent of the defendant and where no objection to the report and recommendation is filed).

During the plea proceeding, the undersigned observed the appearance and responsiveness of defendant in answering questions. Based on that observation, the undersigned is satisfied that, at the time he entered his guilty plea, defendant was in full possession of his faculties, was not suffering from any apparent physical or mental illness, and was not under the influence of narcotics, other drugs, or alcohol.

Prior to accepting defendant's plea, the undersigned addressed defendant personally and in open court and determined his competence to plead. Based on the observations of the undersigned, defendant understands the nature and meaning of the charge in the *Information* and the consequences of the plea of guilty to that charge. Defendant was also addressed personally and in open court and advised of each of the rights referred to in Rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure.

Having engaged in the colloquy required by Rule 11, the Court concludes that defendant's plea is voluntary. Defendant acknowledged that the plea agreement signed by him, his attorney and the attorney for the United States and filed on January 20, 2022, represents the only promises made by anyone regarding the charge in the *Information*. Defendant was advised that the District Judge may accept or reject the *Plea Agreement*. Defendant was further advised that, if the District Judge refuses to accept the *Plea Agreement*, defendant will have the opportunity to withdraw his guilty plea but that, if he does not withdraw his guilty plea under those circumstances, the District Judge may impose a sentence that is more severe than the sentence contemplated in the *Plea Agreement*, up to the statutory maximum.

Defendant confirmed the accuracy of the statement of facts supporting the charge, which is attached to the *Plea Agreement*. He confirmed that he is pleading guilty to Count 1 of the *Information* because he is in fact guilty of that offense. The Court concludes that there is a factual basis for the plea.

The Court concludes that defendant's plea of guilty to Count 1 of the *Information* is knowingly and voluntarily made with understanding of the nature and meaning of the charge and of the consequences of the plea.

It is therefore **RECOMMENDED** that defendant's guilty plea to Count 1 of the *Information* be accepted. Decision on acceptance or rejection of the *Plea Agreement* was deferred for consideration by the District Judge after the preparation of a presentence investigation report.

In accordance with S.D. Ohio Crim. R. 32.1, and as expressly agreed to by defendant through counsel, a written presentence investigation report will be prepared by the United States Probation Office. Defendant will be asked to provide information; defendant's attorney may be present if defendant so wishes. Objections to the presentence report must be made in accordance with the rules of this Court.

If any party seeks review by the District Judge of this *Report and Recommendation*, that party may, within fourteen (14) days, file and serve on all parties objections to the *Report and Recommendation*, specifically designating this *Report and Recommendation*, and the part thereof in question, as well as the basis for objection thereto. 28 U.S.C. §636(b)(1); F.R. Civ. P. 72(b). Response to objections must be filed within fourteen (14) days after being served with a copy thereof. F.R. Civ. P. 72(b).

The parties are specifically advised that failure to object to the *Report and Recommendation* will result in a waiver of the right to *de novo* review by the District Judge and of the right to appeal the decision of the District Court adopting the *Report and Recommendation*.

See United States v. Wandahsega, 924 F.3d 868, 878 (6th Cir. 2019);
Thomas v. Arn, 474 U.S. 140 (1985).

May 23, 2022
Date

s/ Norah McCann King
Norah McCann King
United States Magistrate Judge